

*The Righteous Man's hope in death
consider'd and improv'd.*

146.

I N A

S E R M O N

On OCCASION of the DEATH of
the late REVEREND

Mr. S A M U E L S A Y.

PREACHED IN

W E S T M I N S T E R,

APRIL 24, 1743.

By C. HUGHES, D. D.

" Sic mihi contingat vivere, sicq; mori."

*Published at the Request of Mr. SAY'S
particular Friends.*

L O N D O N:

Printed and sold by M. FENNER, at the *Tart's*
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The Righteous Man's hope in death
considered and answered

IN A
SERMON

On Occasion of the DEATH of
the late Rev. Mr.

Mr. S. A. L. S. A. Y.



WESTMINSTER

APRIL 21, 1743

By G. HUGHES, D.D.

“The main contrivance of the book is good.”

Printed at the Request of the S. A. Y.

Particulars printed.

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Three Kings in Great Street, M. DCCXLIII.

(3)

PROVERBS xiv. 32.

---The righteous hath hope in his death.

THE awful breach, which God has made upon this christian society, will justify sorrow and lamentation: those, who knew the worth of your late excellent *minister*, will not be surprized to hear you crying after him, *My father, my father*: a father in *Israel* is now lost to our world; and to you especially. He, who once and again has spoken to you in the name of the Lord from this place, is now removed into silence, and you shall hear his voice and see his face *no more*.——But I need not aggravate your sorrows; you are sensible of your loss, and you cannot but mourn: this is *human nature*! and *grace* was never designed to destroy, but only to regulate it; to keep the passions with-

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in proper bounds, that they may not be boisterous upon sorrowful occasions.

THE improvement of such providences we should principally aim at; and extract all the good we can out of them; hearing *the voice of the rod, and him who appointed it*; and seriously enquiring, *wherefore GOD contends with us.*

As therefore you have called *me* to the service of this day, I shall endeavour to assist you upon the present melancholy occasion, by suggesting to your mourning minds some hints of *comfort* and of *counsel*, which the words now read will suggest; and which, if duly attended to, will greatly recommend the practice of serious religion, as they exhibit a strong motive to a holy and righteous life.

THE book of *Proverbs*, from whence my text is borrowed, is an admirable collection of wise observations, and serious advice for the conduct of life: and *usually* they are without connection with each other; short pithy sentences entirely independent; useful instructions couched in few words, which complete the sense, without any reference to what precedes or follows. — Though *sometimes* two opposites are connected, in order to make the contrast more strong; and to represent

sent the beauty and importance of each, in a more vigorous and convincing light.

THUS it is in the verse, of which the text is a part; it runs thus, *the wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death.* Here is a direct opposition between the two propositions in the verse, and they serve to illustrate each other.

THEY give us an account of the different ends of *good* and *bad* men; what a strange diversity of circumstances death places them in!

THE wicked is driven away in his wickedness. Observe the deplorable case of a wicked man, when he leaves this world; he is *driven away*, or thrust out of it; and that forely against his will; he clings as close to it as possibly he can; he would by no means quit it; his hope, his happiness, his entire portion, all he wishes and desires, lies here; and therefore here would he live for ever.——But this is absolutely impossible; the command is gone forth, and die he must; his *soul is taken away* by God^a; thus that shocking summons to the *rich fool* in the gospel is express'd, *this night thy soul shall be required of thee*^b. The wicked man does not

^a Job xxvii. 8.

^b Luke xii. 20.

willingly

willingly or calmly resign his soul; no, it is rent and torn from him, it is violently forced away: when the dead-warrant is signed by the sovereign Lord of Life and Death, execution will soon succeed; nor is it in the power of any wicked man to put it by; riches will not bribe, nor the greatest might subdue death; there is no discharge in that war: how *unwilling* soever, the wicked is *driven away* like *dust* or *smoke* or *chaff* before the wind. Oh how he shrinks back affrighted and dismayed! with what earnest cries does he ask a small reprieve? "A little more time, Lord, a little more time!" and with what dreadful distress is he forced to yield to the fatal necessity! *the wicked is driven away*;—it is added, *in his wickedness*: some read *for his wickedness*; and God does sometimes cut short the lives of wicked men for their sins:—*others* understand Solomon's meaning to be, the wicked is driven away *in the VERY ACT of his wickedness*; while he is actually committing sin, he is snatch'd away to give an account for it: this is sometimes the case; but nothing surely can be conceived more dreadful! to go sinning into an eternal world, reeking hot into everlasting burnings! who can bear the killing thought!—*others* give this sense; that wicked men *by their wickedness* often bring death upon

upon themselves; their own sins are the outward means of hastening their death: and there is no question, but the wicked practices and sensual indulgencies of many unhappy men, not only are the occasion of great miseries to them, whilst they live, but help to shorten their lives, and drive them away into eternity. A monstrous solecism in conduct! that those, who have no hopes beyond the present life, should do all they can to hurry themselves out of it!—The most *obvious sense* of the words is, that the wicked man *dies in his sins*; he can't shake them off; they cling close, and go with him into the other world; he dies under the power and guilt of sin, in an unjustified and unsanctified state; and *his evil works follow him, or go along with him*; to be produced in judgment against him, and to procure his eternal condemnation.

THIS is the unhappy condition of *wicked men at death*!—But not so die the *righteous*: there is a vast difference in the two cases; for the righteous, instead of being torn or driven away from the world, easily and without reluctance resign their departing spirits; they have *hope in their death*; such hope, as carries them above the fear of death, and fills them with pleasure in the views of eternity.

Ἀπολυθεὶ μετ' αὐτῶν. Rev. xiv. 13.

Two

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Two things are here to be considered,

1. **THE** character represented under the term *Righteous*.

2. **THE** hope, which men of this character have, *in death*.

1. **LET** us enquire into the character here represented ; *the righteous*.

IN the strictest propriety of speech the term, *Righteousness*, signifies doing that which is *just and right* ; and is most generally used to represent a good man's behaviour towards his fellow-creatures. But tho' in a *primary* sense it may be thus restrained ; yet it is not always to be limited to moral conduct between man and man. It most frequently denotes *universal Godliness* ; and as it stands in the text directly opposed to a general term [*the wicked*] in the preceding part of the verse, I think it ought here to be understood in the utmost latitude. And indeed there is no one term so proper as *this*, to express the whole of practical religion : for *righteousness* means a doing what is right and fit, agreeably to the reason and nature of things ; and is in short, *a paying to ALL their dues*.

WHEREAS

WHEREAS therefore the *great* God has certain demands upon us, we cannot be *righteous*, if we do not answer those demands.—It is but right, that we should *love* and *honour*, *serve* and *obey* God; chearfully lay out ourselves, in the best manner we are able, to *promote his glory*: —I say, this deportment towards God is just, right and becoming; for to him we owe our all.

IN like manner, according to the rank we bear in the creation, we stand related to *mankind* in general; they are to be consider'd as all *made of one flesh and blood* with ourselves, and so we are mutually allied by nature: in virtue of this, our *fellow-creatures* have also their claims upon us, which we are obliged to make good; or otherwise we forfeit the character of *righteous*.—*Universal benevolence, charity, and good-will, a ready disposition to be useful, doing justly and loving mercy, and a diligent care to avoid every thing, which would be in any respect injurious or prejudicial to our neighbour*; these are necessary branches of righteousness; and the character is misapplied, where any of these is *totally* wanting. There is much more religion in these things, than men generally think; or else, they would not take the liberty to reproach and revile one
B another.

another in the manner, that is the scandal of the present age ; and which, it is to be feared, may some time prove destructive to the nation, inasmuch as mutual confidence is hereby utterly destroyed.

LET me further add ; that a great deal is due from every man to *himself* ; which righteousness absolutely requires should be discharged. As *rational* creatures, we are obliged to act according to the dignity of our natures, in *regarding the soul more than the body* ; in maintaining *reason* upon the throne, and making passion, affection, appetite and inclination keep their place below : nor is that man righteous or just to himself, who allows the order of nature to be subverted, and subjects the noble faculties of his soul to the conduct of animal appetite. Strict *sobriety* is a necessary piece of justice due to ourselves : we must restrain all our passions according to the rules of right reason ; or else we offer a shameful indignity to our natures, and sink ourselves to a level with the beasts that perish.

IT may fitly here be subjoined ; that there are particular duties incumbent upon us, arising from the *stations* in which providence has set us, and the *characters* which we sustain in life ; which duties righteousness obliges us to perform.—For instance ;

instance ; they, who have devoted themselves to the service of God, in the gospel of *CHRIST*, are obliged to *fulfil* their *ministry*, and to *magnify* their *office* ; both by a regular and exemplary life, and by diligent attendance upon their work, *watching for souls, as they that must give account* : this every gospel-minister is obliged to ; and if he neglects this, or acts contrary to it, he is unjust and unrighteous ; false to the engagements he is under, and unfaithful to the trust committed to him. In like manner we might consider other characters, and relations of life, with the particular duties annexed to them, which every righteous man will consider himself obliged to observe.

THUS comprehensive is the term [righteous ;] it concludes living *soberly, righteously, and godly*^d.—And is this indeed the extensive sense of *righteousness* ! may we not then lament and cry out? *help, LORD, for the godly man ceaseth ; for the faithful fail from among the children of men* ! the death of every righteous man is a publick loss : and how many such, even amongst our own acquaintance, have been removed within the compass of a very little time past ? we may well say,

^d Tit. ii. 12. • Psal. xii. 1.

"*Help, LORD;*" for unless GOD have mercy upon us, and pour forth more plentiful effusions of his Holy Spirit, religion will soon be driven out of our land, and wickedness become triumphant. I wish to GOD, that the frequent deaths of so many righteous men, both ministers and private christians, may not portend some dreadful judgments near at hand; and so GOD is housing them, before the storm comes: the inspired prophet leads us to put such a construction upon the deaths of good men, in that remarkable passage^f; *the righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart, and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.*

OH that we may find the blessed GOD better to us, than our fears suggest, and than our sins deserve! may the number of the righteous increase in our days, and national reformation avert divine judgments!

2. LET us now enquire into the import of what is here asserted in reference to the righteous; he *hath hope in his death.*

^f Isai. lvii. 1.

By *his* death some understand *the wicked* man's death, and put this construction on the text; "when the good man is struggling with the troubles of life, many of which perhaps are occasion'd to him by the wicked; he has hope, that God will cut off the wicked, and then it shall be well with the righteous." But I confess this construction appears to me unwarrantable and forced; nor indeed can I see how it is consistent with the character of a righteous man, to hope or wish the death of any, how wicked and troublesome soever they are; the repentance, conversion and forgiveness of the wicked is the only proper matter of prayer with reference to them: our Saviour has taught us to show our charity and good-will to our worst enemies in this way: and as the blessed God *takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked*^b; it cannot surely be desired or hoped for by his servants.

By *his* death must certainly be understood *the righteous man's own death*.—The righteous die as well as the wicked: death is the end of all men^b. It is true indeed that *righteousness delivereth from death*, as Solomon tell us^c; i. e. from the worst part

^b Ezek. xxxiii, 11. ^b Eccl. vii. 2. ^c Prov. x. 2.

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of death, from the *sting* and *curse* of it, and from all the sad miseries which attend or follow it in the case of wicked men —but it does not deliver from the *stroke* of death: good men are mortal as well as others. And indeed did their righteousness make them immortal upon earth, and eternally confine them to this world, it would be a curse to them and not a blessing; “ *I lothe it, I would not live always*, says the good man, in the borrowed language of *Job^k*; I have better things in expectation, than what this world can give; death shall deliver me from my present incumbrances, and “ *translate me over to purer enjoyments:*” for *the righteous hath hope in his death*; —so he has in *his life* too; the best foundation to expect the favour and blessing of GOD; *say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him^l*: —but, the grand advantage of his righteousness lies *here*; that it fortifies him against death, and furnishes his soul with *good hope through grace* in that solemn hour, when *the hope of the hypocrite* and the wicked shall be cut off^m: and *their expectation shall perishⁿ*: all the hopes, desires and views of

^k Job vii. 16.
^p Prov. xi. 7.

^l Isai. iii. 10.

^m Job viii. 14.

the wicked are terminated on this lower world; so that when they are driven and forced away from hence, their hope necessarily perishes, and is cut off: but the hopes of the righteous are extended beyond death and the grave into the heavenly world: and his affections being set upon things above, where CHRIST is at the right hand of GOD, he has his portion in full view, when he draws near to death; and by this means his heart is established, his hope remains steadfast, and is the *anchor* of his soul, to preserve it safe in this decisive hour, in all its conflicts with his last enemy: *the righteous hath hope in his death*; which words afford us this doctrinal truth,

THAT the *righteous* are comforted and supported by *hope* in the hour of death.

“None know what death is but the dead.”

It is true: but we may all however easily suppose, that dying work is hard work; it requires a great degree and strength of grace to be able with courage to face the *king of terrors*; to launch forth into eter-

* Pomfret's *Prospect of Death*.

nity

nity how awful and solemn! The best of men have a *natural* fear of death; and this would become exceeding troublesome, did not their hope support and relieve them; their fears would otherwise be most distressing, and destroy their peace: but *hope*, if it does not quite expel their fears, yet it carries their souls in some measure *above* them; it keeps their minds free from ruffles, and enables them to die with comfort.

SOMETIMES this hope is so lively and vigorous, as to make the righteous soul *triumph* in death; he is a *conqueror*, yea *more than so*; and in transports of holy joy he goes forth to meet death, dauntless and exulting: in this glorious manner have some saints concluded life, to the honour of God, the credit of religion, the encouragement and comfort of surviving friends, who surround their beds,

“ *Dissolv'd in tears to see them die.*”

BUT every pious good man does not die thus *triumphing* however, where saints have not such transporting joy in the views of death; yet they have *good hope through grace*, and so are able to die with *composure* and *calmness*: they are not driven, nor forced out of the world; their father calls, and they readily obey; their minds
are

are sedate and resigned; they wait the stroke of death without dread; *not doubting* but they shall find *the mercy of the Lord Jesus unto eternal life*; or at least *hoping*, thro' grace, that this shall be their happy case.

THERE are two things proper to be consider'd, in reference to the *righteous man's hope in death*, viz.

THE *object* of his hope, or what he hopes for; and

THE *grounds*, upon which his hope is founded.

I SHALL suggest a few things under each of these; and then conclude with an application, suitable both to my *Subject*, and to the *melancholy occasion of it*.

I. WHAT is the *object* of the *righteous man's hope in death*? what is it he then hopes for?

THESE three things may suffice for answer:

HE has hope of *the presence of GOD with him, when he dies*.

THIS is able to make a dying bed easy; and this every good christian has the well-grounded hope of. All creature-comforts at that time are helpless and fail; our

dearest friends cannot then relieve us; they may pity us, weep over us, and pray for us, but none of them *can deliver us from the band of the grave*; nay, the very expressions of their tenderness may rather discompose our spirits, than yield us any real comfort at that important juncture.

BUT the presence of GOD will afford divine supports, and *in the multitude of their thoughts within them*, his comforts will *delight the souls of dying saints*; hereby they are made superior to all the terrors of death, and sustain his attacks with a firm intrepidity; resolute zeal and undaunted courage support them in the conflict; and tho' they die, yet they fear not, for GOD *is with them*. With what a noble firmness of mind may the good man, secure of GOD's presence, enter the lists with this enemy? May we not imagine a dying christian bravely meeting death with some such language as this?
 " Art thou *the king of terrors*, death?
 " thus thou art sometimes styled; but I
 " dread thee not: *oh death, where is thy*
 " *sting?* thou art disarmed, and become
 " a conquered *enemy*: nay, I can scarce
 " forbear calling thee *my friend*, as thou

• Psal. lxiv. 19.

"wilt

“ wilt now do me the best office, that
 “ was ever done me:—however, if still
 “ thou art an enemy, yet I fear thee not;
 “ for I know thou hast no power over
 “ me, but by the order of my *best friend*;
 “ thy commission was signed in heaven,
 “ and has *my father's* seal affix'd to it:
 “ —therefore death do thy worst! I
 “ have my GOD with me, my almighty
 “ and never failing friend; his *rod* and
 “ *staff* shall *guide* and support me; tho'
 “ I must die, and leave many of my dear
 “ friends behind, yet I shall have the
 “ presence of my creator with me; he,
 “ who is all in all to me, infinitely better
 “ than all creature-comforts, will not fail
 “ nor forsake me; with pleasure there-
 “ fore I can lay me down and die in the
 “ arms of so kind and able a friend.

2. THE righteous has hope of a *safe passage through death*.

THE ordinary way of passing from *one* world to the *other* is appointed by the sovereign ruler of *all* worlds, to be thro' *the valley of the shadow of death*^p: the passage is dark, covered with deadly shades; and in this view it appears hideous and affrightful; timorous mortals start back amazed, and shudder at the appre-

^p Psal. xxiii. 4:

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hension of so terrible a scene: nay, even good men have some solemn thoughts about it, and at times their doubts and fears:—but *hope* keeps the ascendant, and enables them to say with great pleasure; “I will fear no evil; let the passage be ever so dark, the way ever so hazardous, God be thanked, I am secure of a sufficient guard and guide, to carry me safe thro’ the valley, to the mountains of eternal light and glory, that lie beyond it.” The angels of God are charged with the care of the departing spirit of every saint; this is a considerable branch of their office, as *ministers* in the Redeemer’s kingdom: they minister to the saints on earth, nor can we tell how much indebted we are for their kind and friendly services; they are *all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation*¹: and the last friendly act, they are commission’d to do for the righteous, is to convoy their souls at death, and guard them safe through the regions of the air, where the *prince of this world* has pitch’d his camp; and they will most certainly secure their precious charge from all violent assaults, and deliver it safe into *heaven*; where Jesus our Redeemer sits ready to

¹ Heb. i. 14.

receive the souls of the righteous, and make them welcome. *The beggar died, and his soul was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom*; and every saint is assured of the same powerful protection; and shall be conducted safe through the dark valley of death to the regions of immortal bliss, where they shall be safe and happy for ever. No soul that is recommended into the Redeemer's hands, shall miscarry by the way; every one shall have both a *guide* and a *guard*.

3. THE righteous hath hope of being in *glorious and happy circumstances after death*.

WHAT need he fear death, who can consider it as a passage to heaven? the *wicked* man's bliss expires with his life; but death introduces the *righteous* into circumstances, unspeakably better than ever he was in before. *This* man therefore has as much reason to wish for death, as the *other* has to dread its approach.

WHEN we think of the separation, which death makes betwixt *soul* and *body*, those dear and intimate companions, 'tis awful and shocking: but when we remember, what the gospel assures us, that they are only parted *for a time*, and shall

1 Luke xvi. 22.

'ere long meet together again, and that in vastly improv'd circumstances, and with glorious advantages confer'd on each of them; is there any reason for uneasiness, fear or concern? can you not suppose some excellent christian, in the near views of eternity, his tabernacle shaking, and death advancing apace; and yet in triumphs of joy expressing his hopes in some such comfortable language as this: "I am
 " now ready to be offer'd, and the time
 " of my departure is at hand; shortly
 " I must put off my earthly tabernacle,
 " and my soul must take its flight into
 " the world of spirits! Oh solemn scene!
 " Oh amazing change! but blessed be
 " G O D, I am in no terror, my mind is
 " calm and compos'd—I know thine
 " errand, Death; and who has sent thee:
 " execute thy commission; I resign my
 " self to thy fatal stroke; I have long
 " expected thee, and have carefully pro-
 " vided for thee;—thou art now come,
 " and (I thank G O D) I can bid thee
 " welcome! destroy this *mortal body*;
 " that is all thou canst do; thou canst
 " only send *the dust to the earth, as it*
 " *was*: but even THERE *my flesh shall*
 " rest IN HOPE^t; my body is not always

^t Psal. xvi. 9.

" to

“ to remain under thy power; the time
 “ is coming when thou must resign the
 “ treasure; when the trump of G O D
 “ shall sound, *death and the grave* must
 “ *give up their dead*; tho’ my body is for
 “ a while to be lodged in the prison of a
 “ grave, yet it will be a *prisoner of hope*;
 “ my hope even then is not cut off;
 “ G O D will call, and I shall hear; the
 “ day, the glorious day is coming, when
 “ my body shall be delivered from its
 “ confinement, shall be set at liberty and
 “ enlarged, rescued from the power of
 “ the grave, and shall spring out of
 “ it with heavenly vigour, revived and
 “ refreshed, in a much more sprightly
 “ frame, and with faculties vastly more
 “ improved, than what it ever had in this
 “ state of trial:—and then as to my
 “ *soul*, that heaven-born substance with
 “ which G O D has inspired me; *that is*
 “ out of the reach of death; no arrow
 “ in Death’s quiver can fly so high: my
 “ soul will be so far from receiving *da-*
 “ *mage* in this conflict, that death will
 “ be of the greatest *advantage* to it; the
 “ same stroke that levels my *body* to the
 “ earth, gives opportunity for my *soul*
 “ to rise to heaven; and its clogs and
 “ fetters being broken off, thither will it
 “ speed its flight with eager haste.—
 “ Oh

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" Oh blessed day, when my soul shall
 " be thus enlarged, and shall ascend to
 " GOD, to dwell in his immediate pre-
 " sence, where is *fulness of joy and plea-*
 " *sure for evermore*! — Death delay
 " not, perform thy orders; thou art the
 " best and most welcome messenger I
 " ever received: a happy hour this! I
 " am just entering into my master's
 " joy; heaven is within sight, and I shall
 " soon arrive in that blessed world. I
 " have often long'd, and wish'd, and pray'd
 " to be there; and now behold my prayers
 " shall soon be answered; the happy time
 " is come; farewell vain world, farewell my
 " creature-comforts; farewell for a while
 " my dearest friends; JESUS my Redeemer
 " calls, and waits my arrival in the paradise
 " of GOD——'Tis the voice of my beloved;
 " I am coming, dear JESUS, I am
 " coming; into thy hands I commend
 " my spirit."

THE realizing views of heaven, and
 the well-grounded hopes of it, may thus
 furnish good men with comfort in the
 hour of death, and enable them to *finish*
their course with joy. Thus may we live,
 thus may we die! What would we give
 to be in such a frame and temper, when
 we leave the world!

¹ Psal. xvi. 11.

² Acts xx. 24.

HAVING

HAVING now shewn, what is the *object* of the righteous man's hope in death; let us next enquire.

II. WHAT *grounds* he has for this hope in death; or upon what *foundation* he hopes for such things.

THE righteous man's hope will appear sufficiently supported, if we consider these three things.

I. THE *mercy and grace* of GOD is one foundation, upon which it is built.

THE best of men do not expect these things, by virtue of their own righteousness; they know themselves to be imperfect creatures, and void of merit; they have learned to account themselves *unprofitable servants*, when they have done their best; they allow it to be condescending goodness in the blessed GOD to accept their acts of righteousness and obedience, because attended with vast infirmities; and consequently no way meritorious of such exalted privileges.

BUT as they know they have to do with a GOD of *infinite mercy and grace*; they humbly depend upon him for every needful blessing *in life*; and for these superior blessings, when they *conclude* life: nor are their expectations unwarrantable;

because

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because GOD has already, by the influences of the Holy Spirit, wrought a good work in their hearts, and thereby made them capable of desiring and receiving these blessings at his hands: the apostle teaches them so to argue, *now be that bath wrought us for the self-same thing, is GOD, who also bath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit*."

2. THE *death and sufferings* of our blessed SAVIOUR is another foundation of the righteous man's hope in death.

CHRIST, by the blood of his cross, has merited all these privileges for the righteous; and he is ascended into heaven to make them sure. Though the best of men are unworthy, yet *worthy is the lamb which was slain*; CHRIST is worthy, for whose sake good men should be thus favour'd. It was an original stipulation betwixt the *Father* and the *Son*, that all CHRIST's faithful servants should be brought safe to glory; and he is enter'd into heaven himself, as their *fore-runner* to *prepare places* for them, and will no doubt take care to preserve them safe in their way to it. Though the most excellent and improved saints do not merit these things; yet they have, thro' CHRIST, a

right and title to them; according to the constitution of the covenant of grace, they may claim them, and CHRIST will support their claim. For he has purchased all these for his disciples; the comforting presence of GOD with them at all times; and in every condition; the guard and protection of the holy angels, who are servants to him as universal Lord, and ministers in his kingdom: and eternal life is also a purchase made by our Redeemer for all his saints; even complete happiness at God's right hand, when they have done with the conflicts and exercises of the present unsettled state.

3. THE promises of the gospel are also a sure foundation, on which the righteous build their hope in death.

WE have, says the apostle, exceeding great and precious promises², a rich variety and treasure of them, in the word of GOD, to encourage and confirm our hope; and all these promises shall most assuredly be made good in favour of the righteous: for they are the promises of GOD, who is not a man that he should lie¹; he is faithful that promised²:—besides, all these promises are now ratified in CHRIST JESUS; in him they are yea, and in

¹ 2 Pet. i. 4. ² Numb. xxiii. 19. ³ Heb. x. 23.

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him amen^a; they belong to the covenant of grace, of which HE is the only mediator; and the engagements thereof he will take care to see fulfilled.

GIVE me leave to turn you to a few passages of scripture, which will confirm what I have said, with reference to the *objects* of the righteous man's hope in death.

HE has hope of *the presence of GOD* in his last hours.—And GOD has said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*^b. In the original this promise is express'd in the strongest terms; there are no less than five negative particles in this short sentence; as if the blessed GOD was solicitous, that we should not have the least room to doubt of his promise; did we render it exactly into our language, it would read thus; “No, I will not leave thee; no, “no, I will not forsake thee:” in *life*, at death, and *after death* will GOD be with the righteous: he will be his everlasting friend: *this GOD is our GOD for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death*^c.

AGAIN; the righteous has hope of a *safe passage through death*.—This was the comfort of holy *David* in the views of

^a 2 Cor. i. 20. ^b Heb. *anidgu* ^c Psal. *xlvi. 14.*

death; yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me^d: and David's God will be the God of all good men in every generation; and afford them the like supports and encouragements in death, as well as in life.

ONCE more; the righteous has hope of a glorious happy state after death.—JESUS their Redeemer is gone to prepare a place for them in his father's house above, where are many mansions of glory; this we may be assured of, for if it were not so, says CHRIST, I would have told you^e; our dear master would never have left his disciples at an uncertainty about a matter of such infinite importance.—And at that awful day, when a final separation shall be made betwixt good and bad men, the righteous shall go away into life eternal^f: thus the Psalmist triumphs, thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory^g: the righteous shall enter into peace^h;—as to his SOUL, at death immediately; this day shalt thou be with me in paradise, said CHRIST to the penitent thief, expiring with himself on the cross;

^d Psal. xxiii. 4.

^e John xiv. 2.

^f Matt. xxv. ult.

^g Psal. lxxiii. 24.

^h Isai. lvii. 2.

and

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and we know, that as soon as we are *absent from the body we shall be present with the Lord*¹ —as to SOUL and BODY both, at the great resurrection day; then shall that fond couple be re-united, and made complete in bliss and glory: *the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life*²; the apostle in an elegant manner describes the glories of the resurrection, and represents the improved circumstances in which our bodies shall rise¹: and in other places of the sacred scriptures are many great things said concerning the complete happiness of the righteous at the resurrection; so glorious, so illustrious a happiness shall they then obtain, that it is impossible to form any adequate notion of it at present; *human language can't supply proper words to express it, nor can the thought of man stretch to conceive it; 'twill infinitely surpass our warmest expectation; may we experience the whole at last with pleasure!*

THE doctrinal part of this subject being now gone through; it remains only

¹ 2 Cor. v. 8.

² John v. 28, 29.

¹ *Id.* 1 Cor. xv. 42.

that

has

that we suggest a few things by way
of

APPLICATION.

I. SEE what a wide difference there is
betwixt the *righteous* and the *wicked*.

THEY are different *in life*; they con-
verse in a different manner, their pursuits
are different, they act upon different prin-
ciples and with different views—and

THEY are as different *in death*:—The
WICKED is driven and forced away in
his wickedness. Oh the distracting terrors
of a wicked man's conscience, when he
finds himself upon the confines of an
eternal world! what a deplorable condi-
tion is he then in! “not able to live, and
“yet afraid to die.” Oh the anguish and
distress of his mind, when GOD takes
away his soul! all his comforts going,
and nothing but extreme misery coming
on: his soul snatch'd away from all its
dear delights, and sinking down to eternal
torments; death stares him in the face;
and the flames of hell, as it were, flash
out upon him; so near is he got to that
place of horror. It is beyond his art and
power to stifle conscience at this tremen-
dous hour; though he may have found
methods to keep it drowsy through the
greatest part of his life: it will now awake
with

with vengeance, and fill the unhappy wretch with agonies and terrors, that cannot be conceived—I pray God, none of us may ever know them by experience! —And how can it be otherwise than infinitely distressing to a wicked man, when he lies at the point of death? since which way soever he turns his eyes, he meets with something that aggravates his horrors——if he looks *backwards*, he has the sad review of a life spent in the service of sin, and in direct opposition to the will of God——if he looks *forwards*, how dreadful the prospect!—*above* (for at last he will turn his eyes upwards) he sees an angry God, clothed in robes of justice, ready to take vengeance on his guilty soul for all past insults and provocations daringly offer'd to his majesty:—*beneath* he views hell gaping, ready to devour him, flames of fire, unquenchable fire, prepared for him, and devils ranged in frightful order waiting to give him a terrible reception. —Oh what exquisite sorrow must such a forlorn creature, past all help, and in a hopeless condition, be oppress'd with at that doleful season!

WHEREAS on the other hand the **RIGHTEOUS** hath hope in his death. This man can die with satisfaction; he *finishes his course with joy*: — he can review with

with pleasure a life sincerely devoted to God, and in the main spent in his fear: —he can look *forward* to heaven with joyful expectation; *there* by faith he beholds his reconciled God and father, with a smiling pleased countenance, and *there* he sees JESUS his Redeemer, waiting to receive him to his arms; he has good hope, thro' grace, that his title to heaven is sure, and that CHRIST will support his claim. — This was the happy situation of Saint Paul's soul in the views of death; hear how he triumphs; *I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand*; with what amazing composure does the good man speak of so important a change? and what was this owing to, but *the hope he had in his death*? and this hope arose from a comfortable review of his *former life*, and the joyful expectation of *future blessedness*; for thus he says, *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith*, he was conscious to his own sincerity and righteousness; *henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day*: nor was his case singular, his prospects not peculiar to himself; every good christian may expect the same felicity; for the apostle has added, *and not to me*

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only,

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only, but unto all them also that love his appearing; i. e. all righteous men and true christians, who conduct themselves in life under the influence of a day of judgment, which they expect and wait and hope for.

2. How desirable is the death of the righteous!

He dies a *hopeful death*, in such a manner as every one would wish to die. It was *Balaam's* prayer, *let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his^m*: a good prayer from a wicked man! and indeed even those who care not to live the *life* of the righteous, would be glad to die their *death*: there is something so calm, so peaceful, so promising in it, that it is very desirable; we could even wish our own souls in their souls stead; or are ready to say with *Thomas*, on another occasion, *let us also go and die with themⁿ*.

THOUGH the wicked scoff and make a jest of serious godliness, while they are in health and vigour; while *their mountain stands*, and they prosper: yet when their tabernacles totter, the cracks and flaws portending a dissolution; when they see their *change* approaching; they then have different notions of things; they then

^m Numb. xxiii. 10.

ⁿ John xi. 16.

begin to repent their way of life; they *then* call themselves fools for having been entangled in the vain amusements of life, (if not in carnal indulgences) to the dishonour of GOD, and the neglect of their own souls; whose dangerous state they now perceive, and with eager importunity cry aloud for mercy. What would they now give, could they die the death of the righteous! how happy would they think themselves, if they had that good *hope in death*, that pleasing joy in the views of eternity, which some others have been blessed with in their last hours; whose sanctity and religion they have heretofore ridicul'd and despis'd.—Those who converse frequently with dying men, can testify the truth of what I say; and I'll venture to add, that how much soever wicked men may at present applaud their own conduct; or think it vanity, preciseness, or an unnecessary severity, to attend the care of their souls, and practise religion in good earnest; yet there are very few, if any, can go out of the world with such absurd thoughts: a near view of eternity sets things in a different and more just light, and fills them with inexpressible horror in the apprehension of what is coming upon them.—On the contrary; religion enables a good man to die both

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safely and comfortably: and thus would every man hope and wish to die.

3. SEE here the close connection there is betwixt a *holy life* and a *hopeful death*.

THERE is a necessary connection; none can have a reasonable hope in death, but such as by a good life have provided for it: we should therefore from hence be excited to mind religion, and without delay become *righteous*; the character is worth securing, both for its own *amiable-ness*; the *righteous* is *more excellent than his neighbour*^o: and also for the rich *advantages*, which attend it both in life and death. Let us live the life of the righteous, if we desire to die their death: and let every instance of the death of good christians quicken us to greater care and diligence in the pursuit and practice of religion and virtue; that so we may be indeed *followers* of them, who *thro' faith and patience inherit the promises*^p.

4. LET us bless God, that since it is *appointed for men once to die*, there is foundation for our *hope in death*, and sufficient provision made for the christian's support and comfort at such a solemn season. We owe all this to the rich mercy of God in CHRIST JESUS: so the apostle tells us in

^o Prov. xii. 26.

^p Heb. vi. 12.

that

that triumphant song, which he has left for the use of every expiring saint; O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

5. LET us live in the believing expectation of death, and endeavour to keep ourselves in a constant preparedness for it, that so we may have hope in it.

IT is a sad thing to die a *hopeless death*: 'twill be melancholy to our friends about us; 'twill be uncomfortable to ourselves; 'twill be dishonourable to religion; a reflection upon our christian character and profession: let us then endeavour to get our evidences for heaven clear'd up, the pardon of sins sealed to our souls, and comfortable grounds to conclude, that all things are well settled betwixt God and us: then are we fit either to live or to die; and may with satisfaction at any time leave this world, in the full assurance of complete happiness in the enjoyment of God for ever.

6. LET what has been said, administer comfort to us, under the death of our righteous friends already departed.

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HAD they hope in their death, and shall we *sorrow* for them *as those without hope*! how preposterous and absurd! how unsuitable to our christian faith! how dishonourable and reflecting to our pious friends deceased! They are dead, 'tis true! but are they lost? have they exchange'd worlds to their prejudice? was it not their daily labour to prepare for this great event? did we not observe the regularity of their lives, their piety, their righteousness, their constant endeavours to secure the favour of God? and have we not reason, according to the gospel, to conclude that they are commenced happy; that their *souls* are now at rest with God, and their *bodies* sleeping in hope of a resurrection unto eternal life? and do we lament and mourn? is this our kindness to our friends! — alas! they would not upon any consideration come down to dwell again in this world of sin and sorrow, with the dearest friends they left behind: they are fully pleased with what God has done; and we should endeavour to bring our minds to a placid acquiescence in his determination too.

THIS leads me to take notice of your late worthy pastor, the Reverend Mr. SAMUEL SAY, whose death has given occasion for this discourse. A full account of his
life

life and character is not to be expected in a single sermon: I shall give you the substance of what I can recollect, from my own acquaintance with him, or could gather from such as have known him much longer, and in more intimacy.

He was the second son of the Reverend Mr. Gyles Say, once minister of St. Michael's parish in the town of Southampton; from whence he was ejected by the *Act of Uniformity* in 1662; by which cruel and rigorous act (let the establish'd church take the glory of it, and reflect upon it with all the pleasure they can) two thousand pious ministers were silenced; amongst whom were some of the most excellent in the land, men renowned for religion, for learning, and every valuable qualification, and had few their equals. [My honoured friend, your former minister, the late Reverend Dr. *Edmund Calamy*, has with great care and labour preserved the remembrance of these worthy men, and handed down their names and characters with honour, for the advantage of future generations.] This Mr. Gyles Say, like another *Moses*, chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to hold his living with the violation of his conscience: and I believe, even our enemies

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mies being judges, those, who were ejected at this time, must be accounted, at least, *honest* and *upright* men; since they would not for their temporal advantage comply with any terms, which they apprehended unlawful or unfit.

OUR deceased friend Mr. *Samuel Say*, notwithstanding the discouragements attending the ministry among *Non-Conformists*, did from early life discover a great inclination to that sacred employment. His good father took proper care to have his son educated in the best manner he could for this purpose, from his earliest years: he had made some considerable progress in learning before his father died; and afterwards went through his academical studies under the tutorage of the Reverend Mr. *Thomas Rowe* in *London*, with whom he enter'd about the year 1692. He then appear'd a young man of bright parts, and exceeding good temper, and was well beloved amongst his contemporaries*.

WHEN he had finished his studies, he was chaplain in the family of *Thomas Scott*, Esq; of *Liminge* in the South-East part of *Kent*: this worthy gentleman, and

* The Rev. Dr. *Isaac Watts* was one of them, and bears this testimony to our friend, for whom he always had a great esteem. I thankfully own my obligations to him for several hints in Mr. *Say's* character.

his

his excellent lady [I can't mention their names without peculiar pleasure, as *my own* friends and my *father's*: and indeed their memory will ever be precious to all who knew them] were great ornaments to religion; they had a church in their house, and were a blessing to all the neighbourhood; and many will have cause to bless God for them eternally. Here Mr. Say continued three years, and was well esteem'd by all for his christian behaviour and exemplary conversation.

FROM hence he went to *Andover* in *Hants*, being invited by some friends, who knew his worth; here he continued but a short time; and removed to *Yarmouth* in *Norfolk*: he soon left this place, and was fixed as a constant preacher in the neighbouring town of *Lowestoft* in *Suffolk*; here he continued eighteen years, to labour in the word and doctrine; but not being able all the time to bring the people into a regular church order, he never sustain'd the character of their pastor. From hence he was invited to a congregation at *Ipswich*, and became joint-pastor with the Reverend Mr. *Samuel Baxter*: here he remained nine years; and from hence was called by *this society* to succeed your former excellent and laborious minister, Dr. *Calamy*; hither he removed in the year 1734; and

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here have you enjoyed his useful ministrations ever since; but GOD has now called him to reap the reward of his labours; and this last remove, I doubt not, has lodged him safe in heaven. *Weep not for him!*

As to points of *doctrine* in the affairs of christianity he *called no man master on earth*; he had his Bible in his own hands, and would judge of it for himself: he never confined himself to the sentiments of any party in the things of religion; but followed wheresoever his reason, his conscience, and the scriptures led him. I have just reason to believe (a worthy friend of his of long acquaintance thus writes) “ that he was very hearty
 “ and sincere in believing and preaching
 “ the great principles of the *atonement of*
 “ CHRIST for sin by his death, and the
 “ inlightening and sanctifying *influences of*
 “ the BLESSED SPIRIT; how much so-
 “ ever in our day there may be some, that
 “ depart from those blessed doctrines.”
 For my own part (I take this occasion to say it) I look upon these *doctrines* so much the peculiar, essential and fundamental doctrines of CHRIST's religion, that I cannot see how any deserve the name of *christians*, who do not believe them: take away these blessed truths,
 (which

(which I think are most clearly revealed in the *New Testament*) and the hope and comfort of all serious penitent sinners is destroyed; these are the grand support and relief of humble souls*.

HE was zealous for the purity of the *moral law*; and could not endure to hear of persons pretending to be ministers of the gospel, and yet to expose and slander with warm and unchristian reproaches the preaching of strict virtue and morality, under the name of *moral-babble*: and while he taught men to trust to, and rejoice in the promises of the gospel thro' JESUS CHRIST, he was ever zealous for the observance of the holy law of God in all their conduct.

THIS sufficiently shows, how far he was from expecting *himself*, or teaching *others* any hope of justification before God in their own works: he thought there was some such need of atonement for sin, and of acceptance into the favour of God, as the *New Testament* has taught us by the righteousness and death of the Son of

* I could heartily wish, that those who have their scruples about these important doctrines, would carefully peruse a little treatise, entitled, *The Redeemer and Sanctifier*, by the Rev. Dr. Isaac Watts; wherein the scripture account is set in a most clear and convincing light.

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GOD. This was the matter of his preaching, as well as of his own most glorious hope.

As to the different points of *discipline* and *worship*, by which *christians*, and even *protestants*, have distinguished themselves into many parties, he was not much attach'd to any of them: he thought none of them was written so plainly in the word of God, as to pronounce them *divine*, and exclude all others from that pretence; and consequently his love and affection was permitted to flow largely towards *all them that loved our Lord JESUS CHRIST in sincerity*. He wish'd to see party-distinctions banished from the church: his soul was made up of catholic principles, mingled with a great degree of serious piety.

As to matters of *controversy*, he thought it necessary to read on all sides; and therefore as many *modern disputes* became very voluminous, he did not much attend to them: and this (as he told an intimate friend) made him a much more diligent reader of his Bible. It was from a perpetual perusal of that sacred book, that he drew his religion for *practice* and for *preaching*; and, without doubt, this help'd to keep his mind and soul in a more devotional and religious frame.

HS

HE was a diligent enquirer into the works of GOD in the universe. Mathematics, Astronomy and Natural Philosophy he had a great knowledge of; and was very curious in his remarks. The alteration of the weather, and many remarkable occurrences in nature he had most exactly observed, and for eight and forty years had kept a journal of his observations*, which, I have heard, discovers great sagacity and a very solid judgment. I have often heard him speak of this, as what had afforded him an agreeable pleasure, when he was disposed to relax his mind from more severe studies.

IN things of an *amusing nature*, he entertain'd himself with *poesy*, both of *elder* and *later* times. *Milton* was his favourite poet, whom he read with perpetual delight, and had made many excellent critical observations on the metre and harmony of sounds, as well as the deep sense which may be found in his lines: and indeed (as a very capable judge has inform'd me) he was a very considerable

* He began this journal in the year 1693, and continued it to *April 9, 1743*, three days before his death—but the usefulness of these labours will be in a great measure lost to posterity, many of the observations being set down in a peculiar short-hand, of which no key is left; as I am informed by the ingenious Dr. *Mortimer*, my old acquaintance, and Mr. *Say's* particular friend.

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proficient in the greatest part of poetical criticism.

THOUGH he had an extraordinary genius, yet his great modesty would not allow him to appear much in print; a sermon or two, I believe, is the most he published. He did not want natural courage to maintain whatever he thought just and true, but he was never fond to appear: an uncommon veil of modesty was cast over his other accomplishments.

THE sweetness of his temper, and the tenderness of his heart, secured to him the affection of his relations and friends, for whose welfare he discovered upon all occasions a most compassionate and zealous concern: there was such an openness, integrity, and sincerity, without the least trick or disguise, appeared in his whole behaviour, that made him beloved by all who knew him—and no wonder then that his death is greatly lamented.—

His mourning *widow* now laments the death of a most kind and affectionate *husband*; his *daughter* feels the loss of a most fond and indulgent *father*. May God almighty be their comfort! let them trust in him, and he will be the *father of the fatherless, and the husband of the widow*. You have been sincerely recommended to the divine favour by him, who is now
taken

taken from you: prayers are lodged in heaven for you both, which I hope God will remember, and answer in a rich supply of all valuable blessings for time and eternity.

You of *this society* are deprived of the further labours of a most pious and able minister; who watched for your souls, and willingly laid himself out in your service. You will recollect the seriousness and gravity of his preaching; his faithful warnings; his earnest intreaties; his most tender addresses to you in the name of his great master, that you would turn from your sins, and save your souls alive — nor will you forget his friendly visits, in which he was forward to mix some instructive and serious discourse; he loved to drop a word for God and religion, where-ever he came, if he had a fit opportunity: and as I have been told, it was remarkable, that an uncommon gravity and solemnity appear'd in him, when ever he conversed upon religious and divine subjects.

THE character in the text, I really think, may most fitly be applied to him: he was a *righteous* man; his deportment towards God; his conduct towards his *fellow-creatures*; his *self-government*, discover'd in the regular exercise of his *own passions*

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passions and affections; and his faithful care to fill up his *station* of life with becoming duty;—all these things concur to justify our ranking him among the *righteous*.

AND what the text says, in reference to the righteous, was verified in his case. He, happy man, had *hope in his death*; he saw it approaching, and he met it with comfort; he discover'd a quiet and composed, a placid and resigned spirit, in the views of eternity——and he is now fallen asleep in JESUS!——not lost, blessed be GOD, but gone before!——we now take leave of him for a while; the separation, I trust, will not be eternal; we hope to see him another day with joy in a more glorious world;——till that blessed time we bid him farewel;

“Farewel, bright soul, till we shall
[meet above.

“THERE we shall meet again!

“And live like GODS, tho' now we die
[like men.”



AMEN!

T H E E N D.

~~their bowels too shall rest in peace~~

Till the great rising day :
When at the last loud trumpets sound
To heaven they'll make their way.

H Y M N.

Triumph, ye righteous, in God's grace ;

DEATH! 'tis a melancholy day,
To those, who have no God ;

When the poor soul is forc'd away
To seek her last abode.

In vain to heav'n she lifts her eyes ;
For guilt, a heavy chain,
Still drags her downward from the skies,
To darkness, fire and pain.

But let not death the saints dismay !
God will be with them there :
They may walk thro' her darkest shade
And never yield to fear.

Angels will guide their souls on high,
And guard them up to rest ;
Where, in th' enjoyment of their God,
They'll be for ever blest.

Their

A HYMN.

Their *bodies* too shall rest in hope,
 Till the great rising day :
 When at the last loud trumpets sound,
 To heaven they'll make their way.
 Triumph, ye righteous, in God's grace ;
 Your fears be at an end.
 Body and soul shall meet above :
 And death is but your friend.

In vain to heav'n she lifts her eyes ;
 For guilt, a heavy chain,
 Still drags her downward from the skies,
 To darkness, fire and pain.

God will be with them there ;
 They may walk thro' her darkest shade
 And never yield to fear.

Angels will guide their souls on high,
 And guard them up to rest ;
 Where, in th' enjoyment of their God,
 They'll be for ever blest.

Their

